

STATINTL

And This Is Intelligence?

Publication by columnist Jack Anderson of secret government papers on the India-Pakistan involvement has had a sadly predictable result. The Nixon administration is trying to cover up serious diplomatic blunders by whooping up a witch-hunt for the person or persons who leaked the papers.

The obvious purpose of this maneuver is to divert attention from serious miscalculations by policy makers at home. Cultivation of fear that these revelations compromise the country's security is the method chosen, as it was in the Pentagon Papers fiasco. The diversion is transparent. The errors the Anderson papers reveal are infinitely more damaging to American security in South Asia than the fact of their revelation.

What the papers do show is a shocking self-deception by the planners in Washington. If reports from the field did not coincide with a preconceived notion or a course decided on by the President's advisers, these reports were ignored, even suppressed, and in some cases the senders were punished by being removed from their posts. The whole story reveals too an equally shocking failure by the country's intelligence community to have any idea what really was going on in the Asian subcontinent. Consider the following:

- CIA chief Richard Helms in the early stages of the confrontation between India and Pakistan often read rival claims by the two belligerents without making any judgment on their accuracy, indicating that the intelligence community had no independent information of its own on which to evaluate conflicting testimony. What are we spending billions on intelligence for?

- U.S. Ambassador Kenneth B. Keating in India warned as long ago as last April that Pakistan was finished as a unified state and that Bangladesh would emerge as a separate state. His cable was ignored even after Mr. Keating had repeated his opinion at least a dozen times.

- Continued assessment by U.S. officials on the ground in India and East Bengal that the United States was isolating itself from effective action on the subcontinent was ignored by Washington planners in favor of the opinions of the one ranking official on the spot who agreed with the Nixon advisers' analysis. That adviser, incidentally, was based in West Pakistan's capital, hundreds of miles from the real action.

- A refusal by Washington to agree that brutal

repression of the Bengali majority in East Pakistan and the imprisonment of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was alienating this country in world opinion as well as angering India, the dominant power in the area. Instead the administration insisted on continued arms shipments to Pakistan, even if it had to be shipment by subterfuge.

- Continued insistence in Washington on calling the imminent war on internal affair, when "internal affair" meant to the diplomats on the scene acquiescence in the brutality of the Pakistanis against the Bengalis.

- Refusal to protest the ouster from Dacca by Pakistan of all newsmen and Western eyewitnesses as soon as Pakistani troops began wholesale murder of Bengalis. The U.S. consul in Dacca insisted on cabling reports of these massacres to Washington. His reward was recall. He was decreed an alarmist.

The results of this wishful nonthinking are a major policy defeat for this country, increasing isolation from the emerging power on the subcontinent, and propulsion of India into the arms of the Soviet Union, leaving the United States wrapped in embrace with a feeble, repressive dictatorship whose leader was overthrown by his own people in the midst of the agonized attempts by White House advisers to shore him up.

Why did all this happen? Why the self-deception, the studied deprecation of factual reports from experienced field civil servants?

The only answer that makes any kind of sense postulates a desire of President Nixon to keep his Peking trip on the road to the success plotted by his advisers. Peking backed Pakistan. Was it practical to irritate Peking on the eve of the presidential visit?

China, in the scheme of presidential adviser Henry Kissinger, is the counterbalance to the Soviet-Indian coalition in Asia. The miscalculation here too is cruel. If Mr. Kissinger was intent on counterbalance as a philosophy of diplomacy, why drive India deeper into Russian arms?

The Anderson papers — in addition to demonstrating once again the danger of indiscriminate classification of government papers — show a serious deficiency in our intelligence community, a disdain for factual reports from the field if they don't coincide with preconceived ideas in inner White House circles, and a discord in these circles on how best to protect American interests in the emerging Third World.